VIRGINIA WOOLF'S DIARIES

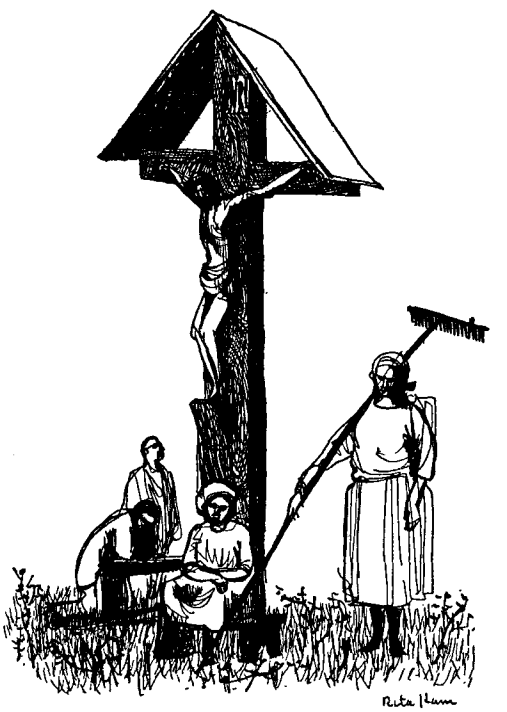
– Anne Fremantle

THE

Commonweal

Future of Christian Culture

by Christopher Dawson



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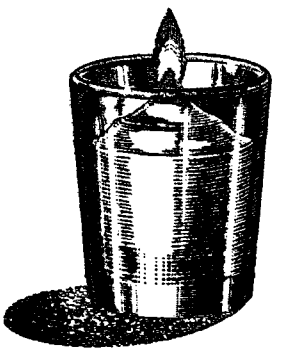

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THE Commonweal

week by week

THE DRAWN BATTLE

THE statement of principle made by President Eisenhower at his press conference on the McCarthy-Stevens affair maps the forthcoming struggle. And the attack will most certainly come. Mr. Eisenhower acknowledged the Senate's right to inquire into the operations of Executive agencies, but demanded that Executive officers be treated courteously and that the chain of command which ends, ultimately, in the house on Pennsylvania Avenue be properly observed.

Courtesy was disposed of once and for all in Senator McCarthy's memorable statement on skunk hunting and lace handkerchiefs. Chain of command is another matter. The success of Senator McCarthy's marauding in this field has been due as much to the timid officers of Executive departments as to his own energies. The administrators of the International Information Agency silently let their subordinates go to the wall. The State Department has on past occasions done the same. The Secretary of the Army now has performed the deed of defiance —and if he took a bullet between the eyes, his initial stand at least dramatized the issue and brought the President into the fight.

It is appropriate that it was the Secretary of the Army who struck back, for the Army's principle of existence is the chain of command. The chain is easy to mock, but it is a bitter necessity if there is to be an Army at all. A professional soldier is not a civilian who works for the government. He is a career man who has contracted his life, on a twenty-year term, to a system which demands loyalty from him and guarantees in turn the system's loyalty to him. He has sharply-defined duties. He is expected to perform those duties without question, and to be accountable for them only to his military superiors. It is the civilian head of the Army who is responsible to the Congress. Senator McCarthy stepped into this system and pilloried a man for carrying out the legitimate orders of his superiors. President Eisenhower now has reiterated the principle which was then violated.

If the President backs up his statement and insists that complaints go to the Secretary of the Army (and that any disciplining which is to be done, be done by the Army itself), then the Executive department of the government will continue to operate as it was intended to operate.

If he does not, and Senator McCarthy makes more forays into the Army's lower echelons, then the Army will go the demoralized way of the International Information Agency and the State Department.

The same principles apply to the other Executive agencies, of course; but the special nature of the Army puts the problem in sharp focus. It was perhaps fortunate that it was the Senator's climactic target.

BUT will Senator McCarthy stop now? The answer surely must be negative. He is expected to attack the State Department for having limited the duties of Scott McLeod. Mr. Dulles is reported to have laid his plans very carefully in this move; he has the backing of the President and feels the matter is crucial if morale is to be improved in the badly-shaken foreign service. And he also is said to be going to give final security clearance to McCarthy-target John Paton Davies, Jr., a man who thus far has successfully undergone octonary jeopardy in the matter of his loyalty. Battles number one and two.

The Senator has also stated that he will recall General Zwicker, and has made his feelings quite clear about the treatment of those he regards as "stupid, arrogant or witless" officers. Battle number three?

To be Faustian about this, Senator McCarthy and President Eisenhower are in a struggle for the soul of the Republican Administration. Constitutional questions of Executive and Congressional responsibility are at stake, but the first prize is whether the Senator is going to dominate this Administration and be boss of the Republican Party. He already has a negative power over the Senate, which

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body is unwilling to cross him. He has an increasing power over the Executive. If the President acts on his principles, he can end this clearly destructive personal power over the operations of the Administration. He will pay a price, however: When the chips are down, Mr. Eisenhower will be the Senator's target. He will get the treatment which George Marshall and Dean Acheson got. He will be accused of having aided and sympathized with the Communists in the immediate postwar years.

But if the President was speaking principles in a vacuum, and the expedient counsels of the 'smart' politicians prevail, then the campaign of 1954 is going to be a campaign on McCarthy's terms, with the McCarthy program rather than the Republican program the issue. And three years of an Administration dominated by a ruthless demagogue might not be fatal to this government, but it could well be fatal to the alliance which is defending our civilization against Soviet totalitarianism.

RECONSTRUCTION IN KOREA

NOTHING less than a land infinitely more productive and prosperous than it has ever been in its whole history seems due a people who, with United Nations backing, were the first in the postwar years to defy the Communist aggressor. Reconstruction with this object was set forth at the UN during the heat of the Korean battle. For, in taking a stand for their beloved homeland, the South Koreans were defending every other free people threatened by aggression in the world. For Korea herself the human and material cost was frightful in the extreme. The world has incurred so great a debt in Korea that it cannot fully be repaid even if the United Nations should succeed in making of that ravaged peninsula "the garden spot of the world."

Promises of this order were not simply made for morale purposes; they carried convictions behind them. And yet many months after the cessation of the fighting how little of that prospect is in view. The American Army has done much to provide roads essential for vital communications. A good harbor for Kunsan on the west coast now provides additional port facilities. A start has been made on repairing the damage incurred in last November's disastrous fire at Pusan.

But what of the mines, power facilities, factories, acreages and fisheries that were counted on to enable the heroic Korean people to become largely self-supporting? Of such postwar projects there is unhappily little to report. Separation from the economic complement of North Korea is a major obstacle that was expected. The unparalleled destruction, the millions of destitute refugees, had likewise been taken into account.

Other factors should have come in for greater consideration. One is the fatalism of the Orient, its disregard for human life. Apparently this has led the Republic of Korea into a number of false starts, such as the investment of several million dollars in a merchant marine which was soon abandoned. After years of captivity and subjection, Korean officials have been concentrating on activities calculated to bring national prestige rather than the food, clothing and shelter so desperately needed: a national express highway with motels, international airlines and broadcasting facilities and the like. If the desire for such national prestige is understandable, its immediate consequences are tragic. And yet the UN and the United States clearly feel constrained from dictating how the ROK authorities are to utilize aid contributed from abroad.

NEXT WEEK

SAM HYNES writes from London on the numerous memoirs, elegies, and tributes which have appeared since the death of Dylan Thomas.

"Stories about Thomas are becoming better known than his name, and the new ones of his death have enough mystery in them (at least in the reports circulated here) to lend themselves to further mythical development. Furthermore, the anxiety of everyone who ever drank in a pub with Thomas to put that fact on record is filling his history so full of binges that it's hard to fit the work in, and this in turn distorts the true picture of Thomas as a careful and dedicated craftsman. I take it as a law of letters that you can't have a fabulous artist and his undistorted art at the same time—you must sacrifice one or the other."

NEW DUST BOWLS

THE shortages of wartime have led to great tracts' being thrown into cultivation. When hostilities cease and the demand subsides, American farming areas tend to find themselves in trouble. The present glut offers a recurring pattern. Mechanized mass production on the land—with emphasis on one-crop cultivation—intensifies the problem.

When the corporation with its giant combines moves in to supplant the comparatively small-acreage homesteader, its concern for the land it is "mining" is something less than abiding. When the land plays out to the extent that commercial fertilizer

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can no longer make it profitable, the caravan of combines moves on to more virgin tracts—or ceases operations if demand falls off.

Good rainfall has up to now concealed the ravages to be visited upon our Western and Southwestern states as a result of recent wartime and postwar operations. Residents there are now fearful of the worst "black blizzards" in twenty years. One of the saddest aspects of the present situation is that a number of farmers who had the sense of responsibility to forego quick profits for the sake of sound soil conservation in the dustbowl areas are today in jeopardy because of cultivators with little thought for the morrow.

THE KNIGHTS AND A BISHOP

WHEN man bites dog, that is, by hallowed tradition, news. And when a Bishop criticizes the Knights of Columbus, that is news too, even though there is no firm tradition in the matter. For the Knights of Columbus is a fraternal organization of Catholic men which enjoys considerable reputation in this country. Its activities are many; in recent years the endeavor which has won it more attention than any other has been the advertising campaign it has carried on in the pages of secular magazines and newspapers. Designed to break down anti-Catholic myths, the K. of C. ads are reported to be very successful among persons who have few other Catholic sources of information.

The Most Rev. Floyd L. Begin, Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland, undoubtedly weighed such commendable activities well before making public his criticism of the Knights in Cleveland. As the Bishop must have anticipated, his remarks about the Knights were carried by newspapers all over the country. Yet what was he to do? His personal observations had led him to conclude that the treatment of Negroes by the K. of C. in Cleveland was unjust and scandalous. He had seen three prominent Catholic Negroes refused admission by a K. of C. council there, and the practice of racial discrimination in membership turned out to be city-wide. Under the circumstances, the Bishop had little choice. "Either I have to say that Negroes are second-rate Catholics," he said, "or I must say that the Knights are not acting as Catholics."

This diagnosis of the situation (and of all other comparable ones) seems to have been quite accurate, and it is hard to see how anyone can disagree with it. The Knights have done good work with their advertising campaign. They should now take immediate action to rectify a situation which should never have been allowed to develop in the first place.

UNDERMINING THE BOARD

IN a highly significant move, the House Labor Committee recently voted to strip the National Labor Relations Board of its authority to handle cases involving unfair labor practices. By a one-vote margin, the House Committee voted instead to leave such cases for action in the Federal courts.

The motives of all of the members of the Committee on this action are not quite clear. Some are reported to be voting for every "tough" amendment to the Taft-Hartley law in the hopes that Congress will eventually let the measure stand in its present form. Others were genuinely expressing a point of view held by some business groups which have long opposed the entire idea of a National Labor Relations Board. Certainly the action was not requested by the Eisenhower Administration, and it was opposed by Secretary of Labor Mitchell.

Whatever the reasoning behind the voting in Committee, the action should not be allowed to become final. Having the National Labor Relations Board able to carry out quasi-judicial functions represented a great gain in labor relations in this country. Throwing these actions onto crowded court calendars, where expense and delays could multiply endlessly, would be a pointless step backward.

LAGGING BEHIND

SPEAKING to the National Conference on Higher Education recently, U. S. Commissioner of Education Samuel M. Brownell discussed a situation of great importance to the national welfare. In five states, Dr. Brownell pointed out, twelve to eighteen per cent of the population between the ages of twenty-five to thirty-four had less than five years of schooling; this group he described as "functionally illiterate." In these five states, draft rejections through failure on the armed forces qualifications test ran from thirty-six per cent in the best state to fifty-eight per cent in the worst. In eleven other states the number of "functional illiterates" in this same age group ran from four to eleven per cent. Draft rejections in these states ranged from a low of thirty-five per cent to a high of forty-seven per cent.

The demands of the draft on the nation's manpower made these figures on illiteracy available and of immediate interest. Naturally enough, the armed forces are disturbed over the high rejection rate involved in widespread illiteracy. But war or peace, draft or no draft, the situation certainly calls for national concern. The figures illustrate dramatically the fact that we are failing to keep pace with our national educational needs.

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THINK AND DOUBLETHINK

DR. Roger W. Holmes, a Mount Holyoke College professor of philosophy, has invented a "thinking" machine which is supposedly capable of reaching the logical, "necessary" conclusion from any set of premises it is fed. Professor Holmes was quick to deny that his machine can do anything which the thinking human being cannot do for himself, but logical conclusions can be reached on the machine with much greater speed and accuracy, he claims.

For instance, here is a set of premises which the machine has to "think about" for only a few seconds before it comes up with the right answer (the example was cited in the AP dispatch on Dr. Holmes' invention): 1. The Senator is aiding either the U. S. or Russia. 2. It is impossible for him to aid the U. S. and at the same time give comfort to the Communists. 3. If he were not giving comfort to the Communists, then he would be attacked by *Pravda*. 4. He is not being attacked by *Pravda*. *Problem*: Is the Senator aiding Russia? *Answer*: The Senator is aiding Russia.

If men were as predictably consistent and guileless as the professor's machine seems to presume, Professor Holmes would really have something here. But the human animal has a habit of knocking all the inexorably "necessary" conclusions of bloodless logic into a cocked hat. Take, for instance, the case cited by the AP as an example of the "thinking" machine's accuracy. You have to start right off with one of those dubious either/or's which are the stock-in-trade of the machine-made judgment of both men and events: "The Senator is aiding either the U. S. or Russia." This might be true, yet who but the omniscient can say for sure? It could well be that the Senator is hurting both Russia and the U. S. about equally, or is aiding both of them unequally, or is actually having a real effect on neither one. There are all kinds of possibilities.

Then we move on to an even more shadowy area and one where human fallibility plays the determining role: "It is impossible for him to aid the U. S. and at the same time give comfort to the Communists." Who says so? The Senator, for instance, might be aiding the U. S. in such a way that the Communists don't see that what they take comfort in now may in the long run actually strengthen America's position. Let's say the Senator is pointing out bitterly that certain American fraternal organizations practice racism. That might provide a useful propaganda point for the Communists. But let's go on to presume that the fraternal organizations, stung by his criticism, do something about it. Then the U. S. is no longer subject to criticism on this score and that, ultimately, deprives the Communists of a selling point. Or let's say that the Senator is taking action against a movement which is both anti-democratic and anti-Communist. (Hitler was not the only one to dislike both.) What then? If the Senator encouraged such a movement merely because it was anti-Communist he might seriously hurt the U. S. at the same time he was arousing the ire of the Communists and their friends.

Next point: "If he were not giving comfort to the Communists, then he would be attacked by *Pravda*." Presuming that *Pravda* was edited by a think-machine and not by human beings, this might go unchallenged. But suppose that *Pravda* knows its praise is the kiss of death for the Senator and its attacks on him actually give comfort to the enemies of Communism? The editors of *Pravda*, surmising how their opponents will react, might say: "We won't attack this Senator because we know that will tip off the fact that he is hurting our cause. His activities would be encouraged by our condemnation." Or suppose that they should say: "This Senator is sowing dissension and distrust between Americans, and that well serves our cause. We will attack him ruthlessly so that his activities will seem to be profoundly anti-Communist. Then he will be encouraged by our enemies and we will benefit from the added dissension and distrust he creates."

Or suppose that *Pravda* does sincerely approve of the Senator for something that he is doing. Does this mean that what he is doing inevitably hurts the U. S.? Yes, if you presume that *Pravda* has no interest other than the destruction of the U. S. But *Pravda* may have many interests: *Pravda's* interests and America's interests may occasionally coincide. Yes, if you presume that *Pravda* infallibly knows what is not in America's best interests and what will actually contribute to the ultimate success of Communism. But *Pravda* is edited and directed by men too, and there is no true reason to endow them with all wisdom.

There is an inner logic in the world of world events and of politics, but it is not so much the logic of the syllogism as of man himself, half brute, half angel and yet neither one. Because man is what he is, you can not weave a syllogism of human behavior and expect a logical, "necessary" conclusion that has universal validity. For just when you think you have human behavior captured in a formula, the sinner turns saint, the saint turns sinner, the logician falls in love and starts to act foolish, the intellectual is seduced by pride and rushes headlong into asininity.

There is only one wholly logical proposition about man that makes sense, and that is that man does not perform with the kind of consistency that can be measured by a machine. I wonder if the "thinking" machine, given the premises, would reach that conclusion.

JOHN COGLEY.

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Future of Christian Culture

CHRISTIANITY OFFERS NO PANACEA BUT FOR THAT VERY REASON A CHRISTIAN CULTURE IS POTENTIALLY FAR MORE OPEN THAN ITS SECULARIST COUNTERPART.

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

THE predicament in which the world finds itself today is due essentially to two factors: first to the acute secularization of Western culture and secondly to the revolt of the rest of the world against it. For more than two centuries Western civilization has been losing contact with the religious traditions on which it was originally founded and devoting all its energies to the conquest and organization of the world by economic and scientific techniques; and for the last fifty years there has been a growing resistance to this exploitation by the rest of the world—a resistance which has now culminated in a revolt which threatens the very existence of Western society.

Nevertheless this revolt is not directed against the process of secularization itself. It is not a question of a conflict between Western materialism and Oriental spirituality. On the contrary, the East is following the example of the West in its revolt against religious tradition and is going even farther in the direction of the total secularization of culture. It may attack the West as the embodiment of economic exploitation, but it cannot object to its materialism, since the basis of its protest rests on the doctrine of economic materialism which it has borrowed from the West.

Where then does Catholicism stand in relation to this situation? In so far as both parties represent rival forms of secularism, it might seem as though Catholicism was not concerned with either of them so that it could look upon the conflict in the same spirit as the Hebrew prophets regarded the mutual destruction of the world empires in the age of Nebuchadnezzar.

But this is far too simplified a view of the situation. Catholicism has been so deeply involved in the history of Western civilization for the last fifteen hundred years that Catholics cannot regard Europe in the same way as the Jews regarded the Gentile world. Even today after the Reformation and the Revolution and the secularization of the modern state and modern culture, our society remains in a certain sense Christian.

But we cannot afford to be optimistic. During the last fifty years the new forces that have arisen in the modern world have been openly anti-Christian ones, and the creation of the totalitarian state in Nazi Germany and in Communist Russia produced a new type of religious persecution which is more subtle and far-reaching than anything that the Church has had to face in the past. It is true that the Communist threat is directed against Western culture as a whole as well as against Christianity. But that does not mean that Western culture has become the conscious defender of the Christian faith and of Christian moral values. On the contrary, there has been a serious slump in the practice of religion during the last fifty years in England, and perhaps in Western Europe as a whole. For in order to understand the religious state of the modern world, we must recognize the existence of two contrary tendencies. On the one hand the standards of the religious minority have been steadily rising, while at the same time the general level of religious practice among the majority of nominal Christians or semi-Christians has been rapidly sinking. Therefore the general over-all tendency is for modern Western society to become increasingly pagan, while at the same time Christianity considered as a minority religion retains and perhaps even increases its vitality and its internal strength.

THE nature of this change is shown very clearly in the survey of *English Life and Leisure* which was published in England in 1951 by B. S. Rowntree and G. R. Lavers. It devotes a good deal of attention to the religious question and makes the first serious attempt to estimate by methods of social survey what influence Christianity exerts in the lives of people today.

The more detailed individual studies and case histories in the survey give the impression that the real cause of modern irreligion is not intellectual, nor is it due to the influence of Communism and dogmatic anti-Christianity. It is sheer indifference: the practical paganism of people who have never thought deeply on this subject, or perhaps on any subject, and who cannot see that Christianity has any relevance to their actual lives.

Mr. Dawson, the author of "The Making of Europe," has written widely on Christianity and modern culture.

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Here are a few typical extracts from the two hundred case histories. Number 3 "is not a church-goer although she has no objection in principle." She merely says, "It's kids' stuff, but if people are so dumb as to swallow it, it's O.K. by me." Number 24 is not interested in religion. She says if saying her prayers would get her a house, she would say them, but everyone knows it's all nonsense. Number 26 is not interested in religion and her sole knowledge of the Christian doctrine is that "at school we used to read aloud from the Bible—one verse in turn round the class. I once went to church with my friend, but it was all bobbing up and down and I couldn't find my place in the book."

Number 34 is entirely indifferent to religion and says he has traveled too much and seen too much of different religions to believe there is such a thing as a true religion. "Religion only means custom."

Number 49 is profoundly contemptuous of religion. "What do these silly old parsons know about it? Can you pay the rates with prayers? I've no time for their sort of talk. I'd like to set them all to work in the mines."

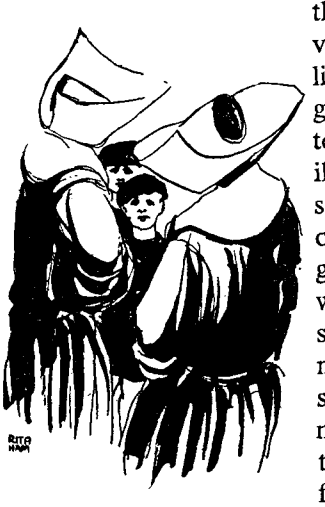
Number 72 never goes to church because he was fed up with church when he was in the army, but in his words, "Mind you, religion's a fine thing if you don't have too much of it." He used to send his children to Sunday school to get them out of the house.

Number 97 has absolutely no religious beliefs and thinks that going to church or not is just like going to the cinema. "It's a matter of what suits you." Number 111 has no religious faith. "Not an Atheist you know; I just don't bother. I like the boys to go to church because they ought to know their way around the church services. They look such fools if they don't, if they ever have to go to church."

NOW this attitude of contemptuous indifference seems to represent the opinion of the majority among the two hundred cases examined. There is of course a considerable minority who take an entirely different view and to whom Christianity is still a living reality. There is a much smaller minority of actively hostile unbelievers including two or three Communists and a few semi-Communists. But each of these seems to be an exceptional type. The real threat to Christianity and also to the future of Western culture, as shown in this survey, is not the rational hostility of a determined minority, but the existence of a great mass of opinion which is not anti-religious but sub-religious, so that it is no longer conscious of any spiritual need for Christianity to fulfill. And this is largely a new situation.

For in the past a low level of culture did not necessarily involve a lack of religious belief. Christianity originally made its strongest appeal to the poor, the uneducated and the socially disinherited: while even the primitive peoples who are the lowest in the scale of material culture have never shown themselves entirely devoid of religious sense.

What is the explanation of this change? I believe it is due above all to the artificial character of modern culture which is unlike anything that previous ages have experienced. Our modern Western secularized culture is a kind of hothouse growth. On the one hand, man is sheltered from the direct impact of reality, while on the other he is subjected to a growing pressure which makes for social conformity. He seldom has to think for himself or make vital decisions. His whole life is spent inside highly organized artificial units—factory, trade union, office, civil service, party—and his success or failure depends on his relations with this organization. If the Church were one of these compulsory organizations modern man would be religious, but since it is voluntary, and makes demands on his spare time, it is felt to be superfluous and unnecessary.



How are Christians to overcome this difficulty? The answer is not an easy one, for the problem of the conversion of the sub-religious is not unlike the problem of the education of the sub-normal. The only real solution is to change the cultural environment which has made it possible for this unnatural state of things to develop. For the sub-religious is also in a certain sense the sub-human, and the fact that apparently healthy and normal individuals can become dehumanized in this way shows that there is something seriously wrong in the society and culture that have made them what they are.

It is a milder form of the same malady which has produced such shocking results in the totalitarian states. In recent years we have often been forced to ask the question how the average well-meaning and well-behaved German or Russian accepted the existence of the concentration camps and the mass purges which have so shocked our humanitarian instincts. And the answer is that the instinct of social conformity is stronger than the instinct of humanitarianism. When the state decides that inhuman measures are required for the good of the party, the individual accepts its decision without criticism and in fact without recognizing what the state is doing.

In Western society this is fortunately still impossible. The state and society as well as the individual still

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accept humanitarian principles as a matter of faith. But where humanitarian principles are not involved, there is the same tendency to subordinate the moral law and still more the higher truths of religious faith to social conformity and social convenience. Nevertheless I do not think that even the secular humanitarian himself can regard this state of things as a satisfactory one. For the contemporary indifference to religion is accompanied by an indifference to many other things which are necessary for the welfare of society. For it is essentially a negative attitude which implies the absence of any deep moral conviction and of any effective social dynamics beyond the appeal to self-interest. It is a sort of spiritual vacuum, which can produce no cultural fruit whatever. In this respect it is inferior even to Communism, which has a dynamic character, even though in the last resort its dynamism is that desire for power which is embodied in the party dictatorships and the police state. And this is one of the greatest dangers that threatens the existence of Western culture when the latter is identified with what we call "the democratic way of life." It produces a society which is spiritually neutral and passive, and consequently it affords an easy prey for any strong, aggressive revolutionary power like Communism.

NOW it is not the business of Christianity to defend our secularized Western culture from the menace of social or political revolution. From the Christian point of view there is not much to choose between passive agnosticism or indifferentism and active materialism. In fact, both of them may be different symptoms or phases of the same spiritual disease. What is vital is to recover the moral and spiritual foundations on which the lives of both the individual and the culture depend: to bring home to the average man that religion is not a pious fiction which has nothing to do with the facts of life, but that it is concerned with realities, that it is in fact the pathway to reality and the law of life. This is no easy task, since a completely secularized culture is a world of make-believe in which the figures of the cinema and the cartoon-strip appear more real than the figures of the Gospel; in which the artificial cycle of wage earning and spending has divorced men from their direct contact with the life of the earth and its natural cycle of labor and harvest; and in which even birth and death and sickness and poverty no longer bring men face to face with ultimate realities, but only bring them into closer dependence on the state and its bureaucracy so that every human need can be met by filling in the appropriate form.

In such a world there still remains one great social and spiritual institution which is the visible embodiment of divine authority and supernatural truth. So long as the Catholic Church is free to lead its own life and to show in its life and teaching the truth for which it stands, it is bound to make an impression on society, however secularized the culture of the latter has become. But if the gap between the Church and secular culture becomes so wide that there is no longer any means of communication or possibility of mutual understanding between them, then there is a danger that the reaction to the Church may be one of repulsion rather than attraction. And so it is not enough for Catholics to maintain a high standard of religious practice within the Catholic community, it is also necessary for them to build a bridge of understanding out into secular culture and to act as interpreters of the Christian faith to the world outside the Church. This work is not limited to direct missionary activity and religious propaganda in the formal sense. It is the business of every Catholic and especially of every educated Catholic.

We see in the past, especially on the Continent in the nineteenth century, that the secularization of Western culture was not the fault of the clergy and the religious orders, which did their work well, but to the failure and passivity of the Catholic laity, who allowed the case for Christianity to go by default and abandoned the field of higher education to the secularists. During the present generation the situation has been changed by the development of Catholic Action. But this is not quite what I am speaking of now. As I understand it, Catholic Action aims at associating the laity with the clergy in the direct missionary activity of the Church. What I am thinking of is the need for educated Catholics to influence contemporary culture by broadening and deepening their own understanding of Catholicism and of Catholic culture.

The fact is that however sub-religious and lacking in spiritual culture and awareness modern society may be, it has a real, if rather foggy, respect for education; and its chief criticisms of orthodox religion are that Christianity is out of date, that the Church takes up a reactionary and obscurantist attitude to modern science and sociology, and that Christians are out of touch with modern thought. Consequently any Catholic who is intellectually alive and is at the same time obviously convinced of the truth of his religion, administers a shock to their preconceived ideas. He is not likely to convert them but he shakes their confidence in the inevitability of the secularist outlook and in the stupidity of the religious view of life.

THIS is the first step and small as it is, it is of vital importance. The second step comes when men become aware of the objective value and importance of religious knowledge: when they realize that such knowledge is no less important for human welfare and for the understanding of reality than economics

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and the science of nature. This step is still beyond the threshold of Christianity; it only leads to a point which is common to all the world religions and to many thinkers who have no religious faith, men such as Matthew Arnold in the nineteenth century and George Santayana in our own age. Nevertheless when this step is taken the turning point has been reached.

The existence of a completely secularized culture and of the sub-religious type of humanity rests on the assumption that religious knowledge is no knowledge and that the only real knowledge is concerned with material things and with man's economic needs. And the moment man becomes aware that he stands on the threshold of a spiritual world which is as real as the material world and is in some degree accessible to his mind, his feet are set on the road which leads to the acceptance of the Christian faith and to membership in the Catholic Church. But he cannot follow this path unless Catholics play their part as interpreters and communicators.

How can this be done? The present situation is that modern secularized culture has become a closed world and has lost all contact with the higher world of spiritual reality. In the past this higher world was rendered intelligible and visible to Western man through the medium of Christian culture, which provided a whole series of ways of approach adapted to the different types of mind and the different forms of intellectual activity. Today all these avenues have become closed by ignorance, prejudice or neglect, and they have to be re-opened by the spiritual and intellectual action of Catholics, each working in his own field towards the common end, and it is here the work of the educated Catholic is of such importance. There is an apostolate of study as well as an apostolate of action and of prayer.

Christian culture is not the same thing as the Christian faith. But it is only through the medium of culture that the Faith can penetrate civilization and transform the thought and ideology of modern society. A Christian culture is a culture which is orientated to supernatural ends and spiritual reality, just as a secularized culture is one which is orientated to material reality and to the satisfaction of man's material needs. This is the basic conflict on which Saint Augustine founded his philosophy of history. In his view the dynamic principle of society is the common will or psychological drive. Therefore the only dynamic principle in a human society which is Godless and self-centered is the will to self-satisfaction—*cupiditas*—whether that is the competitive impulse of selfish acquisitiveness, or man's impulses of class conflict and the will to power on the part of states and nations.

But against this tendency of man to create a self-centered closed world which is ultimately doomed to self-destruction by its own destructive instincts, there is the divine process of spiritual restoration and re-integration which finds its center in the Incarnation and its orbit in the Christian faith. With Christianity a new dynamic principle enters the life of humanity and reorganizes it round a new spiritual center and towards a new supernatural end. This principle is social as well as individual. It is embodied in the life of an organized community—the Catholic Church—and it extends its influence to every aspect of human life and every form of social activity. The elements of human society—family, economic association, city and state—remain the same, but in proportion as they come under the influence of the higher spiritual order, they are directed to new ends.

Thus the contribution of Christianity to culture is not merely the addition of a new religious element; it is a process of re-creation which transforms the whole character of the social organism. It breaks down the closed self-centered world of secularist culture and gives human society a new spiritual purpose which transcends the conflicting interests of individual and class and race. Thus it provides the psychological motive for the creation of a genuinely universal culture from which no class or race is excluded.

No doubt the Christian solution at first sight appears imperfect as compared with the secular ideologies and utopias which offer men everything at once on condition that they submit themselves totally to their control. In fact, however, these ideologies only increase the social divisions and conflicts of the modern world and, instead of creating a utopia, they only plunge mankind deeper and deeper into slavery and war.

Christianity, on the other hand, offers no immediate panacea for the complex malady of the modern world. It has eternity before it and it can afford to take its time. But for that very reason a Christian culture is potentially far wider and more catholic than a secular one. It is God-centered, not man-centered, and it consequently changes the whole pattern of human life by setting it in a new perspective.

Philosophy and science, history and literature, all acquire a new character and become deepened and widened when they are seen in this perspective. That is why the Christian culture of the past saw theology as the queen of the sciences; the extension of the field of the sciences by the growth of knowledge also brings new opportunities for widening the range of Christian culture. Every advance of this kind, however small, makes the Faith more accessible and intelligible to the modern world. We may not be able to build cathedrals like the Catholics of the thirteenth century, or write epics like Dante, but we can all do something to make man conscious of the existence of religious truth and the relevance of Catholic thought, and to let the light into the dark world of a closed secularist culture.

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THE STAGE

THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK

MR. T. S. Eliot's play has drawn, in the main, a dull and sententious press, full of an astonishing condescension and flavored with more than a casual malignancy of tone. There have been, of course, exceptions: *Life* has proposed, the *Sewanee Review* disposed. Indeed, Mr. Bonamy Dobrée's essay in the latter journal seems to me a model of critical poise, coupling a precise account of what goes on in the play with a discreet estimate of its place against the background of Eliot's achievements and intentions. But there are small signs the piece will bask in the sunny indulgence enjoyed by "The Cocktail Party" —which may be all to the good: that play hardly survived the *susurrus* of popular repetition. "The Confidential Clerk" has suffered more than its share of advance exegesis—more than it will perhaps bear—and no one can at this point be ignorant of its elaborate dramatic scheme: the comedy of errors, of mixed and mistaken paternity. In these pages some weeks ago, Mr. Sam Hynes gave, though from an unsympathetic point of view, an admirable statement of its literal facts, and I shall gratefully presume upon that knowledge.

How then is one to confront the curious and enigmatic experience which "The Confidential Clerk" provides? Myself, I find the play, in the formal beauty of its design and the lingering resonance of its tone, a possible masterpiece. Yet it is drama which exists—is, so to speak, defined—in terms of contradiction. It inhabits the narrow conventions of farce, yet so expands them that tragedy may finally camp there. It speaks in the sober voice of a prime secular intelligence of distortions, ruptures, dislocations which have their ultimate seat in the soul. Its language has the cool and vigorous surface of prose, but on examination discloses the harmonious texture of the subtlest poetry: delivered with a just attention to delicacies of balance and weight, its effect can be truly seductive.

Lacking a point of departure, one turns to "The Cocktail Party": until we see that, by contrast with the whorled narrative pattern of the present piece, that former work was simplicity itself. Dramatically, "The Confidential Clerk" represents an advance: in the complex articulation of echoes and correspondences which give a play intricacy, it shows positive mastery; all of its life is actively deployed; all of its ideas have consequences. The beauty of "The Cocktail Party" was largely that of moral statement, and our response was determined by the ease with which we submitted to the authority of the voice behind the statement. Its techniques were chiefly celebration and analysis, and their effect was only incidentally dramatic. In "The Confidential Clerk," Eliot has rather attempted to realize one of his earliest intentions: he has sought to devise a dramatic form "to arrest the flow of spirit." Here he has created portraits of individual human minds and wills engaged in the processess of growth and recognition and acceptance. Someone has astutely called Eliot's theater that neither of ideas nor of character, but the theater of experience, and "The Confidential Clerk" is its fullest achievement to date.

Its themes are large: vocation, the attitude we must take to reality, human relationships and their inadequacy, the consequences of action. Yet these find their unity not in some resolution of the mind, but rather in the activity of the poet's sensibility, and here, I think, is one key with which we may unlock a door into the heart of the play. For its impact is rather emotional than intellectual: we are conscious of a delicate exigency moving throughout the play, a circulating unease which penetrates its deepest recesses. Everywhere we feel sharply that force of which Eliot has spoken elsewhere: the pressure of "some rude unknown psychic material that directs the poet to tell that particular story, to develop that particular situation." Here that pressure would seem to be dismay, even torment, at the sheer weight and pain of human aspiration. It is recorded most movingly in the play's finest scenes: those in which two individuals, interior strangers, attempt a new intimacy—try to marry their solitudes—touch briefly, then veer off. Each is held finally suspended in the self, and we are conscious always of the play's primary image, music: suggesting (as in Shakespeare) some incandescent and harmonious unity to which all life must constantly aspire.

In the Sherek production at the Morosco, again directed by Mr. E. Martin Browne, there is no dominant and overmastering style, but a succession of individual beauties finely conceived and executed. Ina Claire's return to the stage restores to us an actress whose work can be judged only in the context of great continental performing. Her role of a vaguely mystical lady of society is beautifully sustained by Miss Claire, and freshly created at every moment: even in its considerable lacunae. And her registration of a delicately grotesque discomfiture when, in the last act, she must accept as son someone personally distasteful, is possibly the subtlest piece of acting we shall see for a long time. Claude Rains delivers the melancholy Eliot lines with urbane distinction, and it is not until the final scene that we realize how deeply we are enmeshed in his pathos. The dappled, milk-and-honey voice of Joan Greenwood lends a special charm to her playing, but it should not overshadow her brilliant control of the moving second act revelations. In the part of the clerk—actually the least created role—Douglas Watson is studied, precise, and agreeable. Newton Blick and Richard Newton play their characters with an ingenious correctness, and Aline

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MacMahon, as a suburban Pallas Athene, achieves a remarkably sinister effect. There is perhaps, in the present company, a danger of filling in the spare outlines of character with too many details of "personality;" this must be resisted, as must the tendency to relax the severe discipline which Eliot's lines impose. The pace might be a shade more leisurely, and the delineation of some effects a trifle less perfunctory. But the play itself is of the most serious consequence. Mr. Eliot has long been our first poet, and "The Confidential Clerk" discloses the vivifying possibility that we may yet have cause to account him our first dramatist as well. (*At the Morosco.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

BEATING THE BAND

THE movies seldom design a film for the high-brow trade. Frequently a picture falls in that category when it's shown, but what with the high cost of movies, especially those employing stars, producers have to get their investment back, and the high-brow trade is rather limited. So the money-wise producer aims for the masses and then is happy if his picture also attracts the art-house patrons. John Huston (like Stanley Kramer, whose "Home of the Brave," "Member of the Wedding" and "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T." were certainly quality films) refuses to lower his standards to win mass audiences, but with "The African Queen" and "Moulin Rouge" to his credit, he is certainly not averse to turning out box-office successes.

I'm not sure exactly for whom Huston's newest film, "Beat the Devil," was made. It has a roster of stars with mass appeal but its story and satiric themes are handled in such a private sort of way that you have to be in on the know to get the point.

Its plot concerns two couples (Humphrey Bogart and his Italian wife, Gina Lollobrigida; English Edward Underdown and his wife, Jennifer Jones) who become involved in Italy with four mugs who have some wild idea of getting hold of land in Africa that has uranium deposits. What with a shipwreck, a misadventure in Africa and everyone seeming to swindle everyone else, the incidents are fantastic enough in the Seacoast-of-Bohemia manner, but what really confuses the group is that Underdown's wife (Jennifer Jones in a blond wig and strangely miscast) is a dilly Billie Burke kind of character who makes the most of her imagination.

Perhaps the most fun in "Beat the Devil" is to be found in its script written by Huston and Truman Capote from the novel by James Helvivk. It kids everyone, especially the English, and it does not spare those involved in making the film. Bogart speaks of himself as a middle-aged roustabout and sneeringly describes Peter Lorre (who portrays one of the swindlers and is made up to look like an elderly Capote complete with bangs, fancy vest and cigarette holder): "It smokes, it drinks, it philosophizes." The literate dialogue even includes one triple negative: "One can't afford not to associate with people who are not one's sort." I wish there had been more of Robert Morley, who is delightfully wise and petulant as the chief mug; but I particularly liked Edward Underdown's portrait of a stuffy Englishman, especially when he is pursued by the beautiful Miss Lollobrigida.

WILL Rogers, Jr., shows in "The Boy from Oklahoma" that he can handle his boyish charm without overdoing it. The picture is a western in which the hero doesn't approve of carrying a gun. So the crooked mayor of Blue Rock, thinking he's got a booby he can push around, makes this young fellow sheriff. But Will teaches the crooks not to count their boobies before they're hatched and he's also very clever at tracking down the murderer of Nancy Olson's father.

IT'S hard to tell who is kidding whom in "Bait." The picture starts with a promising prologue in which the Devil, played by Cedric Hardwicke, tells how he slips into your thoughts and guides you along the Primrose Path. I'm sure the Devil's plots are not quite the third-rate soap operas that this turns out to be when Hugo Haas marries Cleo Moore, who he thinks is a tramp, and takes her to his cabin in the wildwood just to upset his young partner (John Agar). Fortunately before the two get too involved romantically they see through the diabolic scheme.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

AN APPEAL

The Medical Mission Sisters of Philadelphia, Pa., are establishing the first Catholic General Hospital in Bombay, India. Their object is to make it the largest and most efficient hospital in all India and eventually to add a nursing school and medical college which is to be the first of its kind in that vast country. Just now there is urgent need of several thousand dollars to purchase a sterilizer and important X-ray equipment. The Superior of the Order is herself at present in Bombay supervising the work. Accordingly, all contributions for this purpose may be sent directly to: Mother Anna Dengel, M.D., Holy Family Hospital, St. Andrew's Road, Bandra, Bombay 20, India.

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COMMUNICATIONS

"ANATHEMA SIT"

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: The article entitled "Anathema Sit" by John Cogley in the February 26th number seems to me far below the standard of controversy—and of courtesy—expected of him and of The Commonweal. He has named me twice, quoted me only once but interjected my name into the midst of definitions or descriptions of the "liberal" Catholic which are not mine, which I have never seen before and which I vigorously disavow. By actual count there are in his two columns thirteen phrases which I have not only never used but which I would abhor as applied to him, to any one of the Commonweal staff or to any Catholic communicant.

For example: "phony" "puffed up" "full of hypocrisy" "pusillanimous hypocrites" "dollar hungry" "indolent Elmer Gantrys" "crypto-heretic" "virtue-less faker" etc., etc., etc. These words are not mine but he imbedded my name among them.

Mr. Cogley's statement that "by a 'liberal' Catholic is usually meant one who does not agree with Father Gillis" cannot be logically deduced from anything I have written or spoken.

Worst of all he speaks of "charging a fellow Catholic with heresy." [" . . . if anybody insists on charging a fellow-Catholic with heresy he (should) either put up or shut up."] I certainly have not done that anywhere at any time, and I doubt that any editor or writer in a Catholic paper has done so in this present controversy.

Finally I am surprised at both the content and the tone of the article. I think Mr. Cogley has done me a disservice by inserting my name in the midst of all those offensive epithets. Hurried readers may mistake them for mine.

(*Rev.*) JAMES M. GILLIS, C.S.P.

I am truly sorry that Father Gillis feels I was unfair when I "imbedded" a quotation from his column among other comments on the "liberal" Catholic. Certainly Father Gillis cannot be held responsible for the excesses of those who joined with him in portraying the "liberal" Catholic as one who can "only with difficulty be distinguished from the non-Catholic." I would sincerely regret it if my quoting had that effect. I do not believe in guilt by association and maybe presumed too readily that others don't either. I do find it hard to believe, though, that even a hurried reader would attribute to Father Gillis what was clearly ascribed to other writers and publications.

It does seem, too, that underlying most of the bitter attacks on the "liberal" Catholics has been the veiled charge that these Catholics are not quite orthodox. If there is no question of heresy or near-heresy involved, even in the minds of those who turn on the "liberal" Catholic so savagely, then the controversy reduces itself to nothing more than a political difference between Catholics—which is a perfectly natural division. In that case, the attacks on the "liberal" Catholics, which have almost always been written as if they were defenses of orthodoxy, seem all the more regrettable.

JOHN COGLEY.

MARITAIN'S THOMISM

South Bend, Ind.

TO the Editors: In his review of *The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* by Charles A. Fecher [February 26] Mr. James V. Mullaney writes: "The conception of Thomism found in men like Father M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., Yves Simon or James Collins is much more genuine than the strident Thomism of Maritain's earlier years." It gives me pleasure to see my name associated with those of my respected friends Father D'Arcy and James Collins, but the suggested contrast between my philosophic work and "the strident Thomism . . ." involves a misinterpretation which ought to be corrected.

Apart from a few minor accidents, objectionable features in the early publications of Mr. Maritain boil down to an excess of polemical vehemence. Such excess, which can do a great variety of mischief, inevitably conveys to the minds of some readers an appearance of narrowness. True, from the very beginning of his Thomistic studies, Mr. Maritain has understood Thomism for what it is: a uniquely powerful system of thought which, by reason of its very power, calls for constant growth and a never-ending process of assimilation. The philosophic doctrine set forth by Mr. Maritain in "earlier years" seems to me so firmly established that if my directions proved at variance with it I would throw away my own books and quit philosophizing.

Mr. Mullaney intends to be complimentary to the men who, in his judgment, worked out a "much more genuine" conception of Thomism. I appreciate his intention but, so far, at least, as I am concerned, the compliment itself is totally unappreciated.

YVES R. SIMON.

University of Chicago

DEATH OF FATHER TYRRELL

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editor: Emmet Lavery raises some questions in his letter [February 12] that the present writer is pleased to attempt to answer. The facts concerning the last days of Father George Tyrrell appear to be these.

Father Tyrrell was stricken with a serious illness on July 6, 1909 at the home of Miss Maude Petre. Ap-

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parently he was in the last stages of Bright's disease, although this had not been previously diagnosed. On the 9th of July Miss Petre, greatly concerned because of the critical state of the priest's illness, summoned Baron Von Hugel. It was determined that the sick man must not be allowed to die without the sacraments if he wished them. His mind was clear but his speech was so affected that it was difficult, if not impossible, to understand him. Father Tyrrell asked if he might have Canon Scannell to give him absolution. Miss Petre replied that since the Canon could not be obtained so quickly would Father Dessoulavy, a priest of the Diocese of Southwark and a friend of both Tyrrell and Baron Von Hugel, do. When this last-named priest arrived he had brief conference with Miss Petre and Baron Von Hugel. Baron Von Hugel stated to his certain knowledge: (1) Father Tyrrell would wish to receive the sacraments; (2) he would be truly sorry for whatever harm he had done; and (3) he would not wish to receive the sacraments at the cost of the retractation of what he had said and written and which he believed to be true. Father Dessoulavy entered the sick room, but asked Miss Petre to remain until he had become a little accustomed to Father Tyrrell's speech, so difficult to understand. Then Miss Petre withdrew, leaving the door ajar so that she could hear the voices but not what was said. Father Tyrrell spoke consecutively for some time. At the conclusion Father Dessoulavy gave conditional absolution. The presumption is that since Father Tyrrell was not able, even if he had been willing, to make a formal retractation the confessor gave him the benefit of the doubt and conditional absolution. After Father Dessoulavy left, Father Tyrrell remarked to Maude Petre, "He won't let me die without the sacraments."

On the 12th, the sick man's condition was so grave that it was feared that Father Dessoulavy could not return in time, so the Prior of Storrington was summoned. Miss Petre informed the Prior of the confession and the conditional absolution. The Prior read a formula of faith and administered Extreme Unction. Father Tyrrell was conscious and extended his hand, the one which he could use, for the anointing.

That evening Abbé Henri Bremond arrived.

On the evening of the 14th, Father Tyrrell's mind seemed to clear; he uttered a cry of anguish and extended his arms. Miss Petre placed the crucifix to his lips and Abbé Bremond gave him absolution. Once again the patient lapsed into unconsciousness.

On the morning of the 15th of July at about 9:00, George Tyrrell died. There were present at his deathbed the Abbé Bremond, Miss Petre and two nurses. Immediately Miss Petre and Baron Von Hugel wrote a letter which was sent to the *Times* and the *Daily Mail.* In this letter Baron Von Hugel reiterated the three points which he had made for Father Dessoulavy before the latter went to Father Tyrrell's bedside. Thus, as has been truly said, wittingly or unwittingly, he challenged the ecclesiastical authorities. That is, he asked that his friend be regarded as a son of the Church even though he gave public assurance that the dead man would have been unwilling to make a retractation of his modernist errors even if he had been able to do so. It must not be forgotten that these statements were the Baron's and not Father Tyrrell's.

This is the manner in which J. Lewis May in his book, *Father Tyrrell and the Modernist Movement,* relates the story and in all important details it agrees with Maude Petre's own account.

Catholic burial was, in the circumstances, denied to Father Tyrrell, even the presence of a priest at the grave was forbidden. The Abbé Bremond, however, making a distinction between Henri Bremond the priest and Henri Bremond the friend went, as he said, in the capacity of the latter and bade farewell to George Tyrrell in words of surpassing beauty. Three days later, Bishop Amigo of Southwark issued an order forbidding Abbé Bremond to celebrate Mass in the Diocese of Southwark. Since he soon returned home, this local prohibition had no further effect on Bremond.

It would appear, therefore, one cause and one cause alone deprived Father Tyrrell of Catholic burial, namely, the letter which Baron Von Hugel and Maude Petre composed (but which only Miss Petre signed) and sent to the press.

(*Rev.*) E. HAROLD SMITH.

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PICKET-LINE FIRST

Staten Island, N. Y.

TO the Editors: This is to inform John Cort that "the first time that the Pope ever appeared on a picket line in an American strike" was not during the Woolworth strike in 1937 as he mistakingly believes ["Side by Side with Unions," March 5]. It was in 1934 when the Catholic Workers picketed Ohrbach's.

To keep the record straight, I recall that we carried picket signs with Papal messages from the Labor Encyclicals during the National Biscuit strike in 1935 and also during the May, 1936, seamen's strike. We also carried his message during the picketing of the Mexican Consulate in 1934; the picketing of the German Consulate; the demonstration in front of the Bremen. All this taking place before the ACTU was founded at the Catholic Worker.

STANLEY VISHNEWSKI.

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The Diaries of Virginia Woolf

ANNE FREMANTLE

"AND now with some pleasure I find that it's seven; and must cook dinner. Haddock and sausage meat. I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage and haddock by writing them down."—This is the last entry, dated March 8, 1941, in Virginia Woolf's twenty-six years of diaries, begun in 1915 [*A Writer's Diary*. Harcourt, Brace. $5.]. They give a consecutive record of what she did, the people she saw, and particularly "of what she thought about those people, about herself, about life, and about the books she was writing or hoped to write." Mr. Leonard Woolf has culled from the diaries "scraps and scratchings straightened out a little" as his wife had hoped he might, and made a not so "little book." He has included "practically everything which referred to her own writing." Also, he has included extracts where she was obviously using the diary as a method of practicing or experimenting in the art of writing; also extracts which give an idea of the direct impact upon her mind of scenes and persons—i.e., the raw material of her art; as well as certain comments on the books she was reading.

Virginia Woolf was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, sometime editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* and of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Leslie Stephen first married Thackeray's daughter Harriet, then, three months after her death, Julia Jackson, a lovely widow, by whom he had two sons and two daughters. Virginia, born in 1882, was the goddaughter of James Russell Lowell, U.S. Ambassador in London at the time of her birth. She was dandled on every literary knee in England, and when she was ten, George Meredith wrote to her father that his heart was fast "going to her." Her father was knighted late in life, and Sir William Rothenstein, the painter, has described the "shy, silent Stephen girls in plain black dresses with white lace collars and wrist bands." In 1912 Virginia married Leonard Woolf, one of ten children, a lawyer's son. Her first book, *The Voyage Out,* was published in 1915. In 1917 the Woolfs began to print their own and their friends' books on their own private press, the Hogarth Press, which became a tremendous success. They published several authors later to become famous, for example in 1918, Katherine Mansfield's *Prelude* and T. S. Eliot's *Poems;* in 1920, E. M. Forster's *Story of the Siren.*

Perhaps this posthumously published diary is the greatest of all Virginia Woolf's books, both because it provides a superb delineation of a character more interesting than Mrs. Ramsay or Mrs. Dalloway, or even Orlando; and also because it is about something more interesting even than the passing of time, or the permanence of relationship, and that is the creative process, objectively studied, and subjectively experienced, by a woman of genius. Mr. Ashley Montagu has suggested, in his *The Natural Superiority of Women,* that women have not excelled in the creative arts because their creativity was total, physical and spiritual no less than intellectual and imaginative. If this be true, it may be that in the great women writers, nature, like a gardener aiming at a perfect rose, clips off all buds but one, for almost all the greatest women writers were childless: Jane Austen, the Brontes, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Edith Wharton, Katherine Mansfield, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf. In most too, the body played a minor role: none were beautiful, and most were *maladives,* sickly. But how productive they were—Mrs. Woolf's fertility, for example, is so dependable and steady—over a dozen major works, plenty of *divertissements,* such as *A Room of One's Own,* and the great essays, week after week, for the London *Times Literary Supplement,* that were later published as *The Common Reader,* I and II.

Virginia Woolf's major ambition was to write out of, and about, all the separate layers of human consciousness. Her observations and experiments suggest that there is, as it were, a natural scale, audible to and recognized by all, and that beyond those common, say, two octaves, are other scales, reaching to regions of 'hi-fi' and the bat's squeak, where, ultimately, the human ear and mind are not enough and instruments must be used. But what instruments? Symbolism, or analogy, prayer or Mescalin?

IN the earlier entries, she is still embarrassingly cocooned in herself, and the reader wishes to look away, or skip. Her vanity is her besetting sin, and she knows it: foreseeing the reviews of *Jacob's Room,* she predicts the general line will be that she is becoming "too much in love with the sound of my own voice, indecently affected. . . . Yes, I become rather well known." What depresses her is that she has ceased to interest people, what she fears is to be discounted as

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negligible. Almost at life's end, she is "jealous" when Desmond McCarthy praises T. S. Eliot's *East Coker,* and "only the thought of people suffering more than I do at all consoles." She plans to read "some Homer: one Greek play. But which Greek play? And how much Homer? Sounds very learned, but might really amuse me." Praise is good for her, steadies her, "At last, I like reading my own writing. . . . At forty, I am beginning to learn the mechanism of my own brain—how to get the greatest amount of pleasure and work out of it. The secret is, I think, always so to contrive that work is pleasant." She becomes gradually more objective, sees "her own power of writing with veneration, as of something incredible belonging to someone else, never again to be enjoyed by me." But that state is already, as she describes it, "a whole nervous breakdown in miniature." She herself used riding metaphors often and so should not cavil if it be said that she holds the reins too tight. She is overly intimate, affected, talks of "the old Virginia," is ashamed of a shabby coat, asks whether she only writes essays about herself instead of conveying the true reality. And when the reins are left too lax, the canter becomes a mad gallop, "ants run in my brain, emendations, tributes, feelings, dates —and all the detail that seems to the non-writer so easy." But when she is "entirely and forever my own mistress," what a master of language she is! Everything she touches, lives and lives so intensely that one realizes, as perhaps never before, how terribly, terribly right M. Maritain was when he asked, can an artist be saved? (After discussing the pros and cons for a whole hour he came to an affirmative conclusion: with God all things wonderful are possible. But in the whole universe it is a marvel of grace. For the approximation of the artist to the Creator is so close that the artist's very special temptation is to be Promethean and take, or think one takes, what, like all else, must be given.)

VIRGINIA Woolf, in a paragraph, can immortalize the mercantile smugness of George Booth's house: "horsehair and mahogany the truth of it, and the white panels, Vermeer reproductions, and . . . variegated curtains rather a snobbish disguise"; or a weekend at Garsington, "the slipperiness" of Lady Ottoline's soul, and Mrs. Asquith, "stone white; with the brown veiled eyes of an aged falcon," or the 1927 total eclipse the Woolfs and their friends entrained to the Yorkshire Moors to see at 3 A.M.

> . . . and we thought now it is over—this is the shadow, when suddenly the light went out. We had fallen. It was extinct. There was no color. The earth was dead. That was the astonishing moment, and the next when as if a ball had rebounded the cloud took color on itself again only a sparky ethereal color and so the light came back. I had very strongly the feeling as the light went out of some vast obeisance, something kneeling down and suddenly raised up when the colors came.

NO one has ever arrived at a surer sense of levels, either in herself, in literature, or in life. In herself: "I am old, I am ugly. I am repeating things. Yet, as far as I know, as a writer I am only now writing out my mind." When Sydney comes, "I'm Virginia; when I write I am merely a sensibility. Sometimes I like being Virginia, but only when I'm scattered and various and gregarious." At other times: "I like going from one lighted room to another, such is my brain to me, lighted rooms, and the walks in the fields are corridors." Again: "I don't often trouble now to describe cornfields and groups of harvesting women in loose blues and reds, and little staring yellow frocked girls. But that's not my eyes' fault: coming back the other evening from Charleston, again all my nerves stood upright, flushed, electrified (what's the word?) with the sheer beauty—beauty astounding and superabounding. So that one almost resents it, not being capable of catching it all and holding it all at the moment." In literature, for example, how she lambastes Katherine Mansfield for *Bliss*: "the whole conception is poor, cheap, not the vision, however imperfect, of an interesting mind. . . . I shall have to accept the fact, I'm afraid, that her mind is a very thin soil, laid an inch or two deep upon very barren rock." And in life, she cannot find any significance in "the Salvation Army making Christianity gay for the people, a great deal of nudging and joking. . . . Wonder what they mean by 'Come to the Lord.'" But back in the country, at Rodmell, in Sussex:

> Often down here I have entered into a sanctuary; a nunnery; had a religious retreat; of great agony once; and always some terror; so afraid is one of loneliness, of seeing to the bottom of the vessel. That is one of the experiences I have had here in some Augusts, and got then to a consciousness of what I call "reality," a thing I see before me: something abstract, but residing in the downs or sky, beside which nothing matters: in which I shall rest and continue to exist. Reality I call it. And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me: that which I see. But who knows—once one takes a pen and writes? How difficult not to go making "reality" this and that, whereas it is one thing. . .

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That is, alas, the rub—that it is one thing, and that everything else, and most of all ourselves, are many, and there is the frock consciousness, the party consciousness, the "coarse and usual and dull" Cunard-and-Colefaxe consciousness. Then too, when war came and she was marooned at Rodmell, she found it "very small beer," and enjoyed the air-raids, enjoyed her house bombed for the losing of possessions, the freedom it gave, and the exhilaration. Flat on her face as the German planes hedge-hop over, she doesn't want to die, admits her fear. Watching them chasing and chased she thinks "it would have been a peaceful matter of fact death to be popped off on the terrace playing bowls this very fine cool sunny August evening." And all these moods are many "where it is one thing."

SHE is almost unbelievably English, moored in time and class. "My father, Sir Leslie," she writes, and even in her most private diary never mentions David Cecil without his handle (though she does Enid Jones —the nuance is perfect). She despises *Ulysses* terribly, "an illiterate, underbred book it seems to me: the book of a self-taught working man, and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking and ultimately nauseating." She cannot understand how "Tom, great Tom" (T. S. Eliot) thinks it on a par with *War and Peace*. Class for the English is what color is to a Southerner here, and with Virginia Woolf one is reminded of the Negro who, after listening to a white man griping, griping, commented at the end, "You still white." After her nose has been rubbed in Joyce's genius ("genius it has" she is forced to admit), she still is her middle-class self and Joyce reminds her of "some callow board school boy, full of wits and powers . . . ill at ease." And how cross she is when in the *Granta*, the Cambridge university student magazine, "some little pimpled undergraduate" snubs her "just as he would put a frog in one's bed." It is perhaps the only thing in herself Virginia Woolf could not see and laugh at, the one blind spot in that supremely illuminated mind. She could turn aside from her mother's bed "when she had died, to laugh, secretly at the nurse crying. She's pretending, I said, aged 13, and was afraid I was not feeling enough." And she could also see her "squirrel cage mind" and realize it was a great thing to stop it circling. But when she went abroad, to France, to Italy, to Cassis, to Siena, she was as in need of her tea, as glad to be home again "not to have to ask for Eau Mineral [sic], with which to brush our teeth" as any Britisher ever born, and the strong Italian landscape is too much for her, alien, uncomfortable, she can do nothing with it, or with the shrieking children, and the high cold inns with too few chairs. How badly she copes with 'abroad,' coming to life only to describe the other English in a pension at Lerici, while in Edinburgh she is at her best, funny and moving and wonderfully accurate. How does she, how can she, draw lines so straight without any ruler? And it is this that is part of her genius, this certainty of what she can and must do, this circling with significance these people, and not these others.

When she strays, she is lost, and knows it: when Edwin Muir reviews *The Years* and finds it disappointing she comments, "so I'm found out, and that odious rice pudding of a book is what I thought it, a dank failure." For in it she had tried to go beyond her compass, reach through the tears of things with which she could cope, to where "Christ's blood streams on the firmament." And that she could not, or would not, see. "I enjoy almost everything. Yet I have some restless searcher in me. Why is there not a discovery in life? Something one can lay hands on and say, 'This is it.' My depression is a harassed feeling. I'm looking: but that's not it, that's not it." How right she was—it's not. Yet she could see her illnesses were "partly mystical" with her mind shut up, become chrysalis, and the relief coming when "something springs" and she can again begin to feel the quality of the evening. She can register that the effort to live in two spheres, of the novel and of life, is a strain, and notes that it is "odd how the creative power at once brings the whole universe to order." And she finds André Gide's *Journal* "full of startling recollection, things I could have said myself." But when it comes to Shakespeare or Tolstoy they have an awareness not only of the creative, but also of the redemptive, power that Virginia Woolf totally lacks. It is yet another dimension, that of the whole sick sorry suffering world, of the consciousness of sin, of the fall, that blessed fall. Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, she saw, had it and, in his day, Joyce and Gide and above all, most of all, Kafka, whom she nowhere once mentions.

When she comes into the presence, for example, of Francis Birrell lying "in a hotel bedroom in Russell Square. . . . Quite himself with a lump on his forehead. And is aware of it all. May die under another operation, or slowly stiffen unto complete paralysis. His brain may go," she leaves lest she cry. If a bomb destroys "one of those little alleys with the brass bound curtains and the river smell and the old woman reading" in her beloved London she admits she would feel "well—what the patriots feel." But this is still not to ask that:

> "in the passion of my maker
> be my sinful soul partaker."

This she never came to write, neither with all her heart nor with all her mind nor with all her might.

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The God-making Machines of the Modern World

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL SURVIVAL. By John Lindberg. Columbia. $3.50.

By MARSHALL McLUHAN

JOHN Lindberg is a Swedish nobleman long associated with the League of Nations and now with the United Nations. Catholics will be interested in his history of theology underlying the politics of Plato's Republic and the Western art of ruling and being ruled since Plato. Himself a Manichean resigned to the ordinary necessity of rule by myth and lie, Lindberg argues in his concluding chapter that the new conditions of global inter-communication compel us to scrap the rationalist Manichean hypothesis in favor of a plunge into faith and the City of Love. His march towards this city of the future is headed by a banner quote from Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*: "The essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods."

The revolutionary situation which faces us would appear to have suggested to Lindberg that the man-made machine is the new universe for the making of gods. And whereas the machine of Nature made whatever gods it chose, the machines of man have abolished Nature and enable us to make whatever gods we choose. Perhaps a better way of saying this would be to suggest that modern technology is so comprehensive that it has abolished Nature. The order of the demonic has yielded to the order of art.

Lindberg speaks as one who has spent his life inside the great god-making machines of the modern world. He speaks also from inside the great classical tradition of European rationalist culture and scholarship. He does not write as a Christian. But Lindberg does write as a pagan for whom the Christian doctrine is now, for the first time in history, a plausible and even indispensable hypothesis for social survival.

As an analysis of the pagan theology underlying dominant political theory since Plato, Lindberg's testimony is of first importance. Most readers would find Fustel de Coulange's classic, *The Ancient City*, a valuable preface to Lindberg's book. Jane Harrison's *Themis* and Rachel Levy's *Gate of Horn* are likewise filled with detailed information about the pagan theory of the universe and the city as a machine for the making of gods. And Lindberg assumes to some extent a reader who is at home in pagan ritual and theology.

So far as these concern politics, he also provides a good deal of information himself. For example, most of the first chapters are taken up with a discussion of vertical and horizontal conditions of society. The golden age of primitive man is horizontal socially because there are no institutions. Men are related laterally by kinship but there are no hierarchies and no authority. Moreover the horizontal metaphor (which provides the sleeping giant Finn McCool of *Finnegans Wake*) indicates a state of collective consciousness. A state of homogeneity and non-differentiation which in pagan theory preceeded the fall of man. Vertical man, self-conscious man, rational and civilized man is in this view the result of a spiritual fall. Lindberg agrees with Karl Marx that this fall resulted from the first attempt to transfer or exploit a food or property surplus for private purposes. Horizontal man, pre-historic man, in this view, was innocent of "mine" and "thine." He was without individual self-consciousness. Technological man or post-historic man is rapidly approximating the same state. Instantaneity of global communication plus the abundance of mass-produced goods has created a situation of mental and social collectivism.

It is to tracing the social and political consequences of the "fall" that Lindberg devotes much of his book. Paradoxically, the fall brings about the rise of individual reason and the invention of the instruments of culture and civilization. Reason, the tool-making faculty, is the fruit of evil. And reason is the myth-making power which produces the ruler. The ruler rules by the myth or lie which intimidates men to the point of social obedience. It is important to grasp Lindberg's idea of myths and norms since they have characterized all civilization till now. But henceforth they must have new functions. Myths are for Lindberg the traditional religions imposed on men. They are products of reason. They are expedient lies. They are the means of curbing the monsters bred of men's passions. Norms or moral conventions, on the other hand, are merely a cinematic projection on the screen of the city of the passions and preferences of men. Myths are vertical affairs imposed by ruling authority on the ruled. Norms are horizontal developments spreading outwards in accordance with men's desires. Myths are static. The authoritarian myth-built city is local, brittle, easily susceptible of shock. If one myth falls, all will tend to fall. But the norm-structured society is open, elastic, malleable, receptive of change. Under current conditions of communication the static, myth-built cities of the Western world are doomed, says Lindberg.

The foundations of social survival are, however, to be found in a switch from reason to passion, from fear to love. And the possibility of this switchover resides in our capacity today to discover the creative dynamics of norm-making. Norm, the region of passion and flux, was no basis for any past city. But norm seen as a product of an individual and collective creative activity may be a clue to a new social dynamics. If we can discover by observation of many societies past and present the principles of creativity in morals, we shall have the master-clue to all future government of huge inter-cultural associations of men.

It is the conviction that such a possibility is realizable today that prompts Lindberg to espouse the idea of Christian charity in a spirit of positivism. Not belief but necessity urges him to a Christian idea of society and government. It is the

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same conviction which leads him to abandon the Manichean principles of *realpolitik*.

One tires today of hearing of "important" books. This book provides many striking perspectives on the theological principles underlying the practice of classical politics and economics in the past. It suggests some startling possibilities for Catholics today. And it will perhaps amuse Lindberg to learn that his book is the best introduction written to date to Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Hollywood

THE EASTER EGG HUNT. By Speed Lamkin. Houghton Mifflin. $3.50.

By SEYMOUR KRIM

AT the age of twenty-six Mr. Lamkin works like a seasoned pro: his novel is consciously built rather than poured forth, and his characters behave like genuine people. This last virtue is doubly rare in a young novelist who writes about Hollywood, as does Lamkin. But this author knows how to objectify the "glamor" of movie society in solid characterizations. Laddie Wells, his doomed assistant producer, and Carol Culvers, the doll wife of a millionaire determined to make a star of her, will remain in the reader's memory for a long time. So will many of the lesser members of Mr. Lamkin's cast, because they have all been sharply and devotedly observed.

As a whole, Mr. Lamkin's novel is not quite as impressive as its cast or elaborate inner machinery, however. The reason for this lies in the fact that for all of its detailed feeling for social life in the movie colony, and the brilliance of some of its scenes, the book doesn't contain any new insights of why such people waste themselves or run amok. The mere record of shiny cars, liquor, sex and melancholia is no longer sufficient, novelistically, even if "true"; what we seek today is the revelation of experience, not an itemized account of surface happenings.

Mr. Lamkin, for all his gifts as social observer, doesn't venture in this uncharted but more rewarding direction. He is content to take the role of innocent bystander in this story, which relieves him of the need for expressing an opinion about these unhappy people, or telling his readers exactly how he feels about the Hollywood environment. The form of his book and much of the attitude of the first-person narrator is reminiscent of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. But in Fitzgerald's case the ultimate tragedy of the story justifies the neutral way it is told, and delivers a poignant verdict on the material; in Mr. Lamkin's the tragic end of Laddie Wells seems slightly forced—as if plot-ends were being tied together—and the reader isn't left with any of the purging emotions that would resolve the various tensions generated by the book.

What has happened, I believe, is this: Mr. Lamkin sought a way to deal with the complexities of Hollywood private and social life—whose grandeur and possibilities of Roman excess obviously stimulate his imagination—and finally cast his material into a Fitzgeraldian mold, which he admired and strove to emulate. Thus we have Gatsby's brightly-lit Long Island mansion transplanted to Beverly Hills, and inhabited by the millionaire Culvers and his excellently drawn gin-sucking wife, and we get several more strong touches of an attempt to Fitzgeraldize highlife on the Coast. This does not mean that Mr. Lamkin's observations and love of rich material are not authentic, for I believe they are; it is only that we "see through, and not with the eye," to quote a pauper poet, and Mr. Lamkin is still seeing his Chippendale, diamonds and Booth's Imported Gin with some of Fitzgerald's glittering vision.

Certainly this is natural. As John O'Hara once pointed out, Fitzgerald was the only highly gifted American writer who wrote knowingly of the rich in recent years, and all who follow in this direction will likely borrow from him. He "created" the rich in the imagination of the generation that followed; Mr. Lamkin has still to fully create his own, should he continue in this vein. But more important to this talented novelist's development should be the realization that Fitzgerald is inseparable from the time in which he lived, and the form of his work is an anachronistic model for today; and also that the novel of manners, or the social novel, is only genuinely significant when it illuminates a clearly grasped point of view and makes a definite comment about people's behavior. Mr. Lamkin leaves us up in the air in this department, I'm afraid, and all the hard work and good scenes in his book do not allay that fact.

Buddhism

ASPECTS OF BUDDHISM. By Henri de Lubac, S.J. Translated by George Lamb. Sheed & Ward. $3.

By H. A. REINHOLD

ON a hot December afternoon in 1922 I stood beside the final *stupa* of the famous Boro Budur in mid-Java, an enormous pyramid dedicated to the legendary founder of the Buddhist world religion. I was a seminarian then exploring the world. I was perturbed, like all moderns, by the existence of a complete world religion which is older than Christianity, with a divinized founder, miracles and a "salvation" accepted by hundreds of millions of people who are by no means primitive. It seems that in our age you have to be a very insensitive person indeed not to be perturbed by the resemblances of all the world religions, unless you follow the lowest-denominator apologetics or believe the rest of mankind to be deceived by the Evil One, who has been called the "ape" of God.

Father de Lubac in *Aspects of Buddhism* takes a more Catholic view of the problem. Since Catholics don't believe in or teach the total depravity of man, as the Reformers did, natural reason is given a wider berth in Catholic thought. The classic Protestant teaching has naturally veered towards an exaggerated absoluteness of revelation, and this

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entails the requirement of a total or nearly total originality for the New Testament. But from the Church Fathers down through the greater Scholastics to our own day, Catholic thinkers have acknowledged that the Stoa and the late books of the Old Testament actually foreshadow the Sermon on the Mount. So the great competitors of Christianity—not, however, its offspring, like Mohammed and Karl Marx—in the Far and the Near East, Buddha and Mithra, for example, impersonate the idea of a heaven-sent Savior: Buddha "saving" through heaven-sent wisdom, Mithra "saving" through immolation. Like prayer, sacrifice, ritual and asceticism, not even to mention mysticism, these ideas are what Odo Casel once called *eidos,* basic and original ideas found in all climes and nations in their most primitive as well as sophisticated forms.

It is a pure pleasure to see the sovereign mastery with which Father de Lubac singles out three striking parallelisms for close examination—Christian and Buddhist charity (*maitri*), the role and nature of the "cosmic tree" (cross, pillar of fire, ladder, tree of life, etc.) and the transfigurations of both Christ and Buddha. Father de Lubac, a thorough and honest scholar, has a technical knowledge of Buddhism which inspires full confidence in his book. While at times he has to be as dry as dust to do justice to his task, one puts his book aside with the feeling of gratitude.

The very end of Buddhist salvation—*nirvana*—informs all Buddha's teachings and morals as much as the beatific vision and union with God inform all that Christianity teaches and does. *Maitri*—Buddhist charity—is the very opposite of St. Paul's "We shall never have finished with charity" though all knowledge and action will be swept away. For the Buddhist, since "the person without love has no pain," even "charity" will be swept away, when the individual enters the absolute.

The resemblance of the image of the "Tree" (Christian: of salvation through immolation, leading to the wisdom of the Cross; Buddhist: of knowing, coming to the end of all knowledge) exists because "neither the Buddhist nor the Christian imagination had anything to invent: but found . . . *all* the elements from which . . . to draw their own particular symbol" in older strata of human tradition. Here, as in the transfigurations of both Christ and Buddha, the sophisticated and gnostic atmosphere of Alexandria in Egypt, where Clement and Origen lived a full intellectual life, may have been responsible for unnoticed contacts. The Oriental atmosphere inhaled by these two great Christian intellectuals naturally influenced their whole system of interpretation: but they certainly did not invent the Biblical facts of Mount Tabor and Calvary.

Thus common human nature, intellectual speculation and historical context have added to the impression that has captured the imagination of superficial writers and their readers and made them believe that both religions are simply the Indian and Mediterranean expressions of—shades of Jung!—common arche-

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types. So far no one has been able to disprove that Jesus Christ was an historical person nor to disprove the facts as they were witnessed by Jesus' own contemporaries; while in Buddha's case the Hindu "Old Testament" informed and overlaid literature with enigmatic legend.

Father de Lubac's small book with its keen analysis achieves a by-product. It shows all the ambiguity and agnostic turn of the mind of India, so incomprehensible to the Latin and his quest for "yes or no" and to the Anglo-Saxon's quest for workable compromise. We in the West are apt to see in a man like Nehru a sinister and undecided fence-sitter or double-dealer, but seen against his Hindu background he is subjectively as genuine and truthful as Adenauer, Churchill or Dulles in their Occidental way.

Sad Stories

THE DEATH OF KINGS. By Charles Wertenbaker. Random House. $3.95

By DORIS GRUMBACH.

MY generation, the generation that became aware of itself during the Depression and whose conscience was formed and activated during the New Deal years—this book is about us. It deals with the strategic retreat of our dreams (to be "free to hope, free to trust, free to participate, free to be") before the distilled suspicions of our old, moth-eaten, outmoded liberal idealism. We were what was to be called in later years the "soft-thinkers," the "egg-heads," the "confused liberals" and our defeat by a solid coalition of bonded conformists, converts to the right, spokesmen of self-interest and a Senator with a flair for power is the central tragedy of this thoughtful, exciting and almost painfully retrospective novel.

More particularly, *The Death of Kings* is about a special group of us, those who lived and worked in New York during the late thirties and forties and, even more specifically, worked in weekly journalism. The newsmagazines, like us, grew to full maturity in the thirties, when the sources of information became too numerous and too complex for us to assimilate and make sense of, and when we needed more than news—we needed to know, and fast, what it meant. On this need a man like Louis Baron, the hero of this book, built an empire of influence and power and so transcended his initial purpose. Beginning by using the news to inform, he soon substituted news by selection, news by choice and finally, news slanted so far to the right that it became not a fact but a weapon.

Charles Wertenbaker has taken the rise to power of Louis Baron and his magazine, *Beacon,* combined them with his first-hand, top-level editorial knowledge gained after years at *Time,* seasoned this with his own deep-bred and abiding liberalism, and made of it all a recreation that has a wide, almost universal, application.

Here are the most profound conflicts of our time. Louis Baron started on the side of the *"kings,"* (his term for the six young journalists on his staff. "We're the kings of the present time. . .we wield the scepter of truth"). And he handled a hard word easily: "We are kings of the revolution," he told Bob Berkeley, his right-hand man, and Max Freeman, poet turned Communist, and Phil Chatham, an ambitious editor curbed only by a strong sense of Christian ethics, and Joel Abel, a man rendered sterile by cowardice and self-distrust, and Dick Elgin, Baron's heir apparent, a young and talented editor. These were the men who elicited from Baron an assurance of his good will, and with whom, in 1938, he started on his long and perilous journey. More than anyone Bob Berkeley offered him his full loyalty until the true character of Baron's kingship becomes apparent. "There are no good things," he tells Berkeley as the term of Berkeley's loyalty comes to an end, "there's only a choice of evils."

This conflict between the will to power and the need for personal integrity is resolved in the tragic figure of Dick Elgin, a man whose strong sense of personal duty to his fellowmen, and his rejection of the conventional alliances to that end, made

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him, in Saul Bellow's graphic phrase, the "dangling man" of our time. Too certain of his own convictions to accept the super-imposed discipline of the Communist Party, and too intensely honest to dally in battles of ideas or words, he left a job with the State Department (that strange cubicle of our government that has now become the symbol of so many loyalties, disloyalties, changes of opinion and climate) early in his career to fight for Loyalist Spain, and he later deserted the top managerial echelons of *Beacon* to be at the center of World War II. Our generation thus used up its youth.

One tends to become actively engaged in this novel's complex of ideas, to participate heatedly in its arguments. The equally complex and profuse love lifes of these people assume a rather minor importance. It is inevitable too that the reader will play the old literary game of identification. Wertenbaker makes the usual disavowal of reality, but a good many resemblances pertain. It is a tribute to his book that one quickly loses interest in these obvious parallels because in *The Death of Kings* Mr. Wertenbaker is dealing not in personalities put in larger truths.

APRIL 15 WILL BE THE DEADLINE FOR

THE COMMONWEAL'S *THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY*

$1000 PRIZE ESSAY CONTEST

FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

on the General Subject

"THE CATHOLIC IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY"

JUDGES:

Most Reverend John J. Wright, Bishop of Worcester, Massachusetts
Professor Helen C. White of the University of Wisconsin
Honorable Eugene J. McCarthy, Member of Congress from Minnesota

The Commonweal offers a prize of one thousand dollars for the best 3,000- to 5,000-word essay on this general subject or on any significant aspect of the general subject. The winning essay will be published in The Commonweal. The contest is open to undergraduate students at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, and to Catholic undergraduate students at non-Catholic colleges and universities in this country. (We are grateful to the friend of the magazine who provided the funds for the specific purpose of holding such a contest.)

All entries must be submitted by April 15 to "Essay Contest," The Commonweal, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York City 16. ¶ The winner will be announced and the one thousand dollar prize awarded on or about June 1, 1954. ¶ Seminarians and members of religious communities are not eligible to compete in this contest. ¶ All entries become the property of The Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., and none will be returned. ¶ All entries must be typed, double-space, on single sides of standard-size typewriter paper. ¶ The name, address and university or college of the author of each entry must be typewritten on each page of the essay manuscript. The manuscript of each entry must be clearly marked, "Essay Contest." ¶ The Commonweal reserves the right to select for publication, at its usual rates of payment, any essay submitted in this contest.

Turn Out Lights!

THE JOKER. By Jean Malaquais. Doubleday. $3.95.

BY JOHN A. LYNCH

PIERRE Javelin lives in a city where, to get a hotel room, he must fill out a form indicating not only his name and address but also dependents, education, vaccination, military medals, blood group and half a dozen other similar questions, and then be informed blandly, once the information is given: "All the rooms are occupied." He lives in a city where, when he finally obtains lodging in another hotel by using false papers, he is awakened in the night by the telephone, turns on the light, answers the phone and hears immediately, and only, "You are requested to turn out your light."

It is a city which houses its citizens in monstrous blocks of buildings, "four to five thousand apartments distributed between fifty or so straight parallelepipeds arranged in quincunx," where to see the sky, one must "lie down flat in the street and await inspiration." It is a city where a hostess says, "Eat an apple," and hands you an artichoke.

Pierre Javelin is the Joker and the city is the City, and the allegory is both funny and frightening at the same time.

The surface play, of Pierre as a door-to-door salesman for the National Institute of Beauty and Esthetics (Anti-pimple pomades, Virgin Milk), of his wife (she works at the National Institute of Applied Idiosyncrasy), of Master Bomba and Mistress Kouka who surprisingly show up living in Pierre's apartment, of Doctor Babitch ("I have just been appointed psycho-logician."), is witty, fast and studded with dozens of bright lines, but it is only a framework for the story that lies beneath, the story of the hunter and the hunted.

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"To be is to be one with the City," says Doctor Babitch. "The individual considered as himself has given way to the citizen. Happiness is not up to the individual but to the City." Again: "I have the detailed record of all the remarks you have made in the past year. [What I want now are] all the remarks you might have made and did not." And again: "It's not your head that interests us, but what's inside it."

Pierre, however, whose original crime is that he wrote poetry, is not so easily captured. "I refuse to belong," he says, ". . . not denying the City, but denying myself to the City." Later: "Of what am I guilty? That I do not consent to die."

In the end the City robs Pierre of his wife, his home, his job, his birth certificate (thereby declaring him not to exist), his signature.

But it is enough for Pierre that he knows himself to be himself, for the others, the defeated, the "citizens," all sit "motionless and waxlike and with the glassy eyes of mannequins. . . ." Or, in other instances, they scatter "in all directions as if under the effect of centrifugal force, taking cover behind doors, which, as soon as opened, pour out the never-ending bellowing of the radio."

One quickly compares Malaquais to Orwell, for both have seen damnation. But I think Malaquais compares, too, with Silone, for the maxims we have come to expect from Silone are found here in abundance, and I find them pleasant and in no way annoying. Two at random:

"If error advertised itself as error, no one would err."

"It is not given to anyone to be on both sides of a door at once."

REVIEWERS

Marshall McLuhan is author of *The Mechanical Bride*.

Seymour Krim is editor of a new short-story anthology, *Manhattan*.

Father H. A. Reinhold is an eminent liturgist, and is pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Sunnyside, Washington.

Doris Grumbach is a former member of the staff of *Time*.

John A. Lynch is a critic and short-story writer.

Personal

There are ten editors listed on the inside cover of The Commonweal, but only five are full-time. The policy of the magazine is largely in their hands. Here are some vital statistics on this staff as it is now constituted:

Average age: 35. Of the five, three are married and have a total of twelve children. Three are army veterans (all served as enlisted men). Three came from the Middle West to work for The Commonweal, one from the deep South and one was actually born in New York. At some time or another the present editors attended the following schools: Williams College, Fordham, Columbia, Notre Dame, Loyola (Chicago), University of Chicago, University of Fribourg (Switzerland), University of Michigan and University of Detroit. Three had backgrounds in journalism before they joined the staff of this magazine, two had been on the faculties of Catholic universities and one came direct from college. (No numerical contradiction here: one editor doubled as a journalist and college instructor.) All five are born Catholics.

Of the five other names, the part-time staffers: The average age is a little higher, an even 40. Three are married and have a total of ten children. They live now in New York City, Boston and San Francisco. Their alma maters include Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, University of Illinois, Columbia and St. Peter's College. One now teaches at Fordham. Four of the five are native Americans, one is a transplanted Englishwoman. Three are born Catholics and two are converts.

The oldest of all ten in point of service with the magazine is the editor-in-chief, who joined the staff in 1933. The last to arrive on the Commonweal scene is the drama critic, who took over in 1952.

THE EDITORS.

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An Open Letter....

New York, N. Y.

TO Our Subscribers: How large is your stake in The Commonweal? To what extent do you share in the magazine's general attitudes and viewpoints? The success or failure of The Commonweal's 30th Anniversary Campaign will depend on your answer to this question.

If many of our readers agreed with us on every specific issue of the day, we, above all others, would be very surprised. We expect disagreement, and it has even been said that we court it. As we pointed out recently in "What Is The Commonweal?": "This is as it should be. Anyone publishing a journal of opinion, Catholic or not, must count on the fact that the world is full of people with opinions of their own." But this magazine does depend for its existence upon people who believe in the idea of The Commonweal, who think its continued existence adds something to the American—and Catholic—scene.

How strongly do our readers believe in the idea of The Commonweal? We do not know. The weeks ahead will tell the story. If you think The Commonweal is important, we urge you to do what you can to get new subscribers for the magazine's 30th Anniversary Campaign.

Our goal is 8,000 new subscribers this year. At this point the number seems an ambitiously large one. Yet reaching it is vitally important to the future of The Commonweal. You can help greatly to get the campaign off to a good start by making use now of the coupon below or of the cards recently mailed to subscribers.

Sincerely,
The Editors.

PS: Total new subscriptions received to date: 537. Total still to go: 7,463.

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